
Public Benefit Rating System**Tax reductions for open space and natural resource protections**

The Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs) program provides an incentive to encourage landowners to voluntarily conserve and protect open space and natural resources. Properties enrolled in the program are assessed at a “current use” value for the protected portion of the property rather than the “highest and best” value. The reduction in taxable value ranges from 50% to 90% for the **portion of the property** in PBRs. Under King County’s new Critical Areas Ordinance adopted on October 25, 2004, property owners who complete and implement certain property management plans may also be eligible for PBRs benefits.

Eligibility requirements for PBRs enrollment

To be eligible for open space classification under PBRs a property must contain one or more open space resources. Properties are evaluated for eligibility and percentage of tax reduction based on the number of resources protected on the property. Existing PBRs resource categories include protection of natural resources like aquifers, significant plant, wildlife, or salmon habitat, open space and recreational resources like trails or other areas offering public access, and other public resources like historic landmarks.

The PBRs program is currently being updated

An ordinance proposing updates to the PBRs program is before the Metropolitan King County Council. The list of existing resource categories and existing eligibility requirements are being rewritten to improve clarity and program efficiency, but most of the existing categories remain in the proposed update.

New PBRs categories proposed

Two new open space categories, rural stewardship and watershed protection, have been proposed as additional qualifying resources for property owners who may choose to develop Rural Stewardship Plans, Forest Stewardship Plans, or otherwise protect resources on their property beyond the standard critical areas protections.

Under the proposed rural stewardship category, a property owner with an approved Rural Stewardship plan who enrolls at least two acres in PBRs that are in native vegetation or in the process of reforestation or restoration will be able to enroll that area in the program. Under the proposed watershed protection category, a property owner with an additional fifteen percent of forest cover beyond that required by county regulation will be able to enroll that portion of their property. This area must be forested or in the process of reforestation, and must be at least an acre or 25% of the property acreage, whichever is greater.

For more information

The ordinance updating the PBRs program and adding the new open space resource categories has not yet been approved by the King County Council. Therefore some information

about eligibility under the new Critical Areas Ordinance is still unresolved. In the meantime, program staff can answer general questions and explain how the program currently works.

For more information, please contact:

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More information is available online at <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/incentiv.htm>

Alternative formats available upon request by calling 206-296-6519